MULTILINGUAL MEMORY OF MIGRATION A PARTICIPATORY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN AUSTRIA

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Izvleček/Abstract
The article lays out the method of the participatory Oral History project "Multilingual Memory of Migration" against the political background of an unacknowledged Austrian migration history and the political paradigm of monolingualism. The participatory concept engages students in a research process of Austrian migration history, addressing especially (but not exclusively) students with an own migration and multilingual background to conduct intergenerational biographical interviews. By benefitting from the students' language skills and community outreach, the project aims at creating a contribution to a national "archive of migration" as such not institu–tionalized in Austria.

Večjezični spomin migracije
Participativni projekt ustne zgodovine v Avstriji
V članku je predstavljena participativna metoda, ki smo jo razvili v okviru projekta "Večjezični spomin migracije" v luči političnega ozadja nepriznane avstrijske migracijske zgodovine in politične paradigme enojezičnosti. Participativni koncept vključuje dijake v raziskovalni proces avstrijske migracijske zgodovine, pri čemer nagovarja zlasti (vendar ne izključno) dijake z lastnim migracijskim in večjezičnim ozadjem, ki v okviru projekta izvajajo medgeneracijske biografske intervjuje. Namen projekta je na podlagi jezikovnih spretnosti učencev in stikov s skupnostjo ustvariti prispevek k nacionalnemu "arhivu migracij", ki kot tak v Avstriji ni institucionaliziran.

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Austria as an unacknowledged post-migration society

By all historical and statistical indicators, Austria has become a country of immigration since the 1960—ies (Rupnow, 2017, pp. 39-41). In 2022, the Austrian Statistics counted 2351800 inhabitants with "foreign background" (defined as people whose parents were both born abroad) of 8900800 inhabitants altogether. In the city of Vienna, it is 951500 inhabitants with "foreign background" among 1915800 inhabitants (Statistik Austria, 2023).

For decades, Austria referred to its migration as something transitory, by defining the country's political function toward the migration streams of the Cold War era as a "transit country" (Rathkolb, 2005, pp. 49-52) and by considering work migration of so called "guest workers" ("Gastarbeiter") following the "recruitment agreements" ("Anwerbeabkommen") with Turkey (1964) and former Yugoslavia (1966) as temporary, based on a principle of rotation and not providing for families to join the predominantly male manual labour force (Bakondy, 2017, p. 118). When this illusion crumbled, right wing populist slogans (against "foreigners", "migrants", "Muslims" etc.) put politics under permanent stress since the 1980—ies and resulted in endless series of law amendments (Osmanbasic, 2010, pp. 37-76). But the obvious and irreversible fact that Austria had become a (post-)migration society was hardly fully acknowledged by mainstream politics. An acknowledgement happened mainly in a repressive sense, confronting migration by a restrictive national discourse that ought to control this development by demands of an "integration" that actually means "assimilation". In order to become Austrian citizens, migrants have to study national history to testify their willingness to integrate (Rupnow, 2017, p. 38), whilst "an engagement by the mainstream society with the migrants' past, their historical experiences and memories, is completely lacking. Obviously, this paternalistic stance towards migrants, which demands of them an engagement with 'our' history while their own history, including the history of their migration, remains almost entirely invisible and shielded, is deeply problematic. The history of migration and migrants is a blank space in hegemonic memory." (Rupnow, 2017, p. 39)

This also applies to the Austrian archival landscape where the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of migrant groups and their languages remain clearly underrepresented (Hintermann, 2013; Rupnow, 2019). A central archive of migration has been demanded for more than 10 years (Archiv der Migration, n.d.),

by indicating to such institutions in countries like Germany and France. There have been important single projects such as the "gastarbajteri" exhibition of Wien Museum and Initiative Minderheiten (2004), but they never substantiated institutionally on the national level. Permanent institutions were founded only on regional and municipal level, in the city of Salzburg (Migrationsarchiv, n.d.) and in Tyrol (ZeMiT, n.d.).

The same deficit can be seen in Austrian Collections of Oral History, a method that has dealt from the beginning with marginal groups who otherwise leave few traces in hegemonial cultural and historical institutions (Thomson, 1998, p. 584).

Monolingualism and Multilingualism

"The belief in the redemptive power of language seems to lurk in the backs of minds of people who try to stem the tide of immigrants by questioning their degree of language proficiency and thus their ability to fully participate in what the CDU politician Friedrich Merz called in 2000 'deutsche Leitkultur' as a gauge for the integration of foreigners." (Seeba, 2004, p. 1)

In the background of the politically conservative discourse of "Leitkultur" (an affirmative notion of a hegemonial national "culture"), Hinrich Seeba detected a claim for purity of language, which had long existed parallel to a claim for purity of blood. The notion of "Leitkultur" was taken over by the Austrian politicians of the right wing FPÖ and the conservative ÖVP (Herzog-Punzenberger, 2011). The latter embraces it emphatically in its current "Österreichplan" where the call for "assimilation" as the only form of "integration" is again directly linked to the notion of a national "Leitkultur" (ÖVP, 2024).

Like other European countries, Austria guarantees the rights of several autochthonous minority languages ("Minderheitensprachen"). This guarantee was written into the Austrian constitution, on the basis of the Austrian State Treaty of 1955, by which the country gained its full freedom after ten years of post war occupation, thus inscribing into its foundational document of national sovereignty a pluralistic concept of ethnicities and language groups. This legislation (written into Austrian Law by the Ethnic groups act, Volksgruppengesetz, of 1976; for details on this legislation see: De Cillia, 2022, pp. 177-178) converges with the European Charta for Regional or Minority Languages of 1992 (Council of Europe, n.d.), signed and ratified by Austria, which defines minority languages as languages "traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group

numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; (…) it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants". The implementation of the laws evolving from these minority rights varied. In the province of Carinthia, it met fierce resistance, sometimes spurred by the provincial government itself (especially during the long period of the right wing FPÖ/BZÖ government 1989-91 and 1999-2008), and the installation of bilingual German-Slovenian town signs was never fully realized (Pührer, 2007).

But who is a "migrant" and who is "autochthonous"? Many groups who share and maintain other languages than German – such as Turkish, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Polish or Arab started settling in Austria three or four genera–tions ago and they outnumber by far the "autochthonous" minority groups, representing considerable percentage of the population in many regions and cities (De Cillia, 2022, pp. 173-74). However, their languages have been granted comparatively minimal rights, for instance in the field of education (for the legal regulation of promotion and training of "new minority" language see: De Cillia, 2022, pp. 180-181). Their languages appear to be understood as "migrant languages", thus excluded by definition from the mentioned European Charta, even beyond the fourth generation of residence and with large part of the speakers being Austrian citizens. In terms of (legal) history, the difference between regional minority languages and minorities based on 20th century immigration can be explained, but concerning the individual and collective rights of citizens in a nationally defined society, it produces a highly questionable ratio of inclusion and exclusion (Krumm, 2020, p. 6; Gogolin & Oeter, 2011, opt for an adaptation of minority language rights for "migrant" language rights, given the lasting experience with the implementation of the former). When does a language spoken by hundreds of thousands of residents, most of them here for two and many for three or four generations, become part of Austrian cultural heritage and Austrian history? What prohibits a constant flow of integration of cultural heritage according to the composition of the population?

Political monolingualism (for its European and Austrian history see Fritz, 2022) values a single national language beyond pragmatic needs of administration and social cohesion, by not just asking all permanent inhabitants to share this language, but by excluding other languages from "settling" as part of a national heritage along with their speakers who have settled here for generations. It does notcontent itself with an "as well as" in the sense of: All permanent inhabitants shall know well German and are equally welcomed to cherish and care for their other languages. Proficiency in German language is demanded as a main feature of integration (with

ever more regulations and on ever higher levels, see De Cillia, 2022, pp. 179-180) and as such leaves no space for the acknowledgement of other languages—according to a stubborn, ideologically sustained misunderstanding about language learning that wants children and youths with other first languages to focus exclusively on German (for the positive interdependence of first and second language see De Cillia, 2015-16). Paradoxically, while all kinds of multilingualism gained within family and social environment are undervalued, the need to study "foreign languages" is clearly acknowledged (therefore family and community-based knowledge of languages that are usually taught as foreign languages, such as English or French, is esteemed). The ignorance toward multilingualism is most conspicuous in political attempts of language prohibition. When the Austrian right-wing party FPÖ joined coalitions in regional governments of Upper and Lower Austria in 2015 and 2023, it launched prohibitions of other languages in the educational sphere. The Ministry of Education rejected such attempts as unconstitutional (Fleck, 2022), but the aspired law was never brought in front of a higher court, what led the political actors to reiterate the prohibitions as "recommendations" to the schools (Krumm, 2020, p. 1). However unjustifiable these attempts are in their legal standing and however week in their pragmatic relevance, they do have an effect ideologically: They support defensive monolingual or racist "linguicism" (see Dirim, 2017) and signal that the maintenance of other languages, along with German and the "foreign" languages established in the standard educational curriculum, does not belong to Austrian mainstream culture.

The participatory research design

The participatory design of the project "Multilingual Memory of Migration" (acronym MEMMIG) reacts to both, the lack of an Austrian "archive of migration" and the disregard of the given multilingualism.
Participatory research is defined as an umbrella term for research designs, methods, and frameworks that use systematic inquiry in direct collaboration with those affected by the issue being studied for the purpose of action or change (Cargo & Mercer, 2008). In the social sciences, it "engages those who are not necessarily trained in research but belong to or represent the interests of the people who are the focus of the research" (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020, p. 1). As such, participatory research has a wide range of methods, with varying degrees and possible stages of

participation: from research design to data collection, data analysis up to dissemination and political action (for an overview of methods and key sources see: Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). Participatory collaboration in scientific research is particularly meaningful when it comes to groups that tend to be excluded from or kept at the margins of political and societal hegemony and have reduced possibilities of self-determination and limited agency in political as well as cultural fields, as was shown to be the case for migrants' languages and history.

In MEMMIG, students of migrant background collaborate in the research on migration biographies led by the author, a senior researcher at the Institute of Culture Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and funded by the national program Sparkling Science 2.0 (Sparkling Science, 2023). By recruiting interview partners and conducting the interviews, hundreds of students from different schools and teacher training institutions manifest a social outreach to diverse migrant communities an academic or archival institution could hardly achieve. In the intergenerational interviews, the students mostly belong to a second or third generation after migration whereas the interviewees immigrated to Austria. Hence, the students mediate between the predominantly German-language sphere of education and cultural heritage, and a social sphere to which they belong by their first or family languages.

Here, the participatory design actually opens the field of academic research and extends the range of national cultural heritage. Since large part of the biographical interviews is conducted in languages shared by interviewers and interviewees, those languages are inscribed into the Austrian archival heritage. All interviews are published online in the Austrian Mediathek as the country's major media archive, translated into German and subtitles. In the Austrian Mediathek, many of these languages have so far not been represented by a single audio recording, such as Chechnian, Pashtu and Luxembourgian, or only with voice-over translations such as Albanian.

Hence, the extremely diverse language skills of Austrian students collaborating in the project enable biographical interviews with persons who might not tell their life stories equally well in German; they build a bridge of confidence toward the interviewees by sharing a lingual and, to some extent, cultural background; and a multitude of languages recorded by good standards of Oral History (interview style, undisturbed environment, technical quality etc.) become part of the national archive.

Procedure of collaboration

The procedure of collaboration is roughly the same in all student groups: school classes from 9th degree on and teacher training university courses (at the University of Vienna and the University College of Teacher Education Vienna/PH Wien). The author who leads the project takes the full responsibility to teach, train and accompany students through all stages of the interviews, while teachers and university scientific staff form the link to the educational institutions with their specific requirements, support the project organisation and take part in the entire discursive process.

Collaborating groups
Groups and schools are selected according to a relatively high percentage of students with migration background. The selected schools in Vienna and Lower Austria include public and private schools, grammar schools, and vocational schools without university entrance exams (for the participant schools see: Sparkling Science, n.d.). The collaboration with university courses, with groups roughly the same size as school classes (around 20 to 27 students), turned out to be very productive and extends the project method's dissemination.

Networks
Among the actors in the field of education, individual researchers and networks of multilingualism and diversity management have embraced the project with most interest, intuition and understanding and have given reason to the unexpected intensity of collaboration on university level. (The Centre for Teacher Education of the University of Vienna overlaps institutionally with the Department of Linguistics, thus having excellent resources for pedagogical studies of multilingualism, and was a project partner from the beginning. The pedagogical network of multilingualism "voXmi" also endorsed the project in many ways.)

"Migration" biographies
The range of the term "migration" and "migrant" is conceived to be wide and flexible. As it has been most feasible to realize the project with entire pre-existing groups including an average of roughly one third of "autochthonous" Austrians without any recent migration background, it was also practically useful to explicitly

include domestic migration and migration within the German speaking countries (Germany leading quantitatively among the countries of origin in current Austrian migration). What is usually labelled as "mobility" in a globalised society—such as studying abroad, "ex-pat" and diplomatic careers—is included, too. "Migration" thus frames all long-term movements that display a major impact on an entire biography, putting more emphasis on the shifts and their biographical effects than on geographical distance.

Procedure of participation

In schools, participation is first of all organised in one-year projects with entire classes, obligatory for all students. This turned out to be the most efficient mode of collaboration since the project requires determination over a relatively long timespan, across various phases of preparation and execution. University participation is organised within the semester frame of courses.

Preparation of interviews:

- The preparations of interviews starts with a self-introduction of all member of a group, presenting personal backgrounds and resources in the context of the project.
- Small groups of students brainstorm associations on the notion of "migration" based on their own experience. Possible (but not necessarily available) interviewees are shortly presented and the group elaborates questions they would like to ask this person. From the notes of various groups, a general interview questionnaire is extracted, further arranged and elaborated as open-ended, inviting questions that can later be adjusted to individual interview partners.
- How to perform an open life story interview is elaborated and explained in detail by the head of the project (as an experienced oral historian) as well as foreshadowed practically in a short team exercise enabling observations of different roles in the setting.

Interview teams:

Two to four students create an interview team, if possible, along a shared language which can become interview language. Main roles in a team are: recruiting,

contacting and informing future interviewees; performing the interview; and supporting the interviewer during the session. A student who finds no "language partner" in the group can perform an interview on his or her own.

Choice of interviewees:
For recruiting interviewees, there are two central rules: The interviews have to be intergenerational, and interviewees must not be interviewed by close relatives. So, a student recruiting a close relative as interviewee shall not be present in the interview session.

Final briefing before the interview:
In a final individual or small group briefing, the students' general questionnaire is specified to a single interviewee. To inquire further ideas and possible topics, the students are encouraged to engage their (grand-)parents in conversations about the upcoming interview and their own experience.

Method of interviews
From the research perspective, the interviews are conceived rather flexible as to tolerate a wide range of interviewers' behaviours and communicative evolvement, giving priority to the interviewees' storytelling in the sense of Oral History, but also providing space for more conversational modes in the intergenerational setting. This flexibility of interviews, as well as the significant role of student collaborators for the entire project is made visible in the setting of video interviews: with both interlocutors visible in symmetrical position.

Figure 1: Interview setting in the project "Multilingual Memory of Migration", © Georg Traska

A strict segmenting of the interview in two respectively three phases has proved useful as an orienting structure for the students as interviewers and productive for the stories told.

- In the first "narrative" part the interviewees are invited to tell their life stories and shall be interrupted at most by simple questions of understanding. It allows them to construct their own personal migration story within the frame a life story interview, this construction being significant for migration studies. E.g. some interviewees structure their stories exclusively along educational and professional career; some talk extensively about political suppression and flight; others focus mainly on their lives in Austria and their struggles of belonging or on their attempts to balance integration and maintenance of cultural traditions brought along.

- In a second phase, the interviewer shall ask content-specific questions, either questions evolving from the narrative phase or prepared questions. Now, the interview may become more conversational, and the roles of asking and answering may eventually change, since the interviewers or their families sometimes share a lot with the interviewees: such as regional, and cultural or political contexts of origin, dependence on certain historical events, trajectories of migration, a sense of community belonging in Austria etc. Therefore, interviewers are encouraged in the preparation to eventually disclose something of their own or their family's experience as a motive for a question.

- In a break between first and second part, an accompanying student supports the interviewer by discussing follow-up questions arising from the narrative part and discussing which of the prepared questions are most relevant.

- In a third, optional part, interviewees can talk about images, photos or objects of memory they have been asked to prepare.

Recordings, data collection, and translation
The interviews are either audio or video recorded, audio by the students themselves (with a uniform set of recorders of sufficient sound quality, easy and safe handling), video by the author as an experienced cameraman of interviews.
At the Austrian Mediathek (www.mediathek.at), the country's most comprehensive media archive, all interviews are preserved, catalogued and, if agreed to by the

interviewees, published online. Declarations of agreement are signed after the interview, with the option of specifying the way of publication (e.g. excluding certain sequences of the interview).

Interviewees and interviewers are preliminarily offered the use of pseudonyms or their first names only.

All non-German language interviews are fully translated into German and subtitled in order to allow full access on the level of national historical and cultural heritage.

Conclusion: multilingualism and (post-)migration in the students' research practice

Multiple languages and individual multilingualism are important in the entire course of the project, as a resource of the participant students, as a means of accessing and communicating with interviewees, and as a subject of biographical narration.

For many students, the invitation to engage in a first language other than German is a challenge since those first languages are often limited to private use and have not developed at same pace with the youths' educational and intellectual lives. (Only around 20% of students with other or additional first languages than German makes use of the first language training offered as non-obligatory courses in Austrian schools; see De Cillia, 2022, p. 181). A clear majority of students, when asked if they have ever used their first languages (other than German) actively in their educational career, answers "no". Still, students assess their first language skills fairly well.

They can articulate their insecurity, yet very few of them are reluctant to accept the challenge of the project to mobilize their first language skills for the production of archival documents. Many of them report that they enjoy engaging in their first languages in this context and cite their friends and parents having been stunned about the opportunity.

One way of mitigating the students' insecurity in a public and recorded use of their first language, is to assure them that they can always switch language (e.g. between Kurdish and Turkish, or Chechnian and Russian) or resort to German, whenever they are missing a word or a phrase or whenever it facilitates the communication with an interviewee. Indeed, any form of heteroglossia (Busch, 2013), occurring in the interviews and replicating the socially given multilingualism, coincides with the research interest in the nexus between languages and migration stories.

Students individually manage the transition between German, as the educational institutions' working language, and the languages to be used in the interviews. Many students produce, of their own accord, a written translation of the general questionnaire into the planned interview language; and some involve their family in doing so.

In a conclusive session of the collaboration, students report and discuss the experience of interviewing and present the interviews. For that purpose, they are asked to play a short passage of the audio or video recording and translate that section. This is handled flexibly according to the students' abilities and to the effort that can adequately be asked from them. University students are asked to translate subtitles (generated by AI in the original language) from the audio. In other groups, students give rough simultaneous or consecutive translations during the presentation. Anyway, it is important that the interview languages are also brought back to German as the shared educational language and thus the entire circle of multilingual back and forth references is fulfilled in a small sample.

Pedagogical efforts to foster multilingualism gravitate around recognition, acceptance and opening spaces for unhindered language use—against an established backdrop of bias and undervaluation - and they promote children's' and students' positive "language awareness" (Vetter et al., 2022), e.g manifested visibly in "schoolscapes" (Vetter, 2022) or by working with language portraits ("Sprachenporträts", see Krumm, 2010).

Also, first language training is claimed to be implemented in the regular school curriculum to improve the deplorably weak participation in first language courses offered now only on a voluntary basis and in addition to the regular curriculum.

In this pedagogical context, the specificity of MEMMIG as a participatory research project consists in challenging the students to reach out of the social space of school and thereby make use of their language skills beyond the private sphere and beyond a sheltered sphere of education. They do what they do not just for the sake of using specific or multiple languages, but they produce documents for a national archive as research partners. For that purpose, their language skills are a most valuable resources, and the languages they use are themselves full of history and meaning in the intergenerational life story interviews (for a criticism of language sensitive teaching in the context of history teaching that misses to seriously deal with current methods and contents of history teaching, see Kühberger, 2017). In addition, by connecting to a social sphere outside school, students who do not share their first

language with other members in the classroom are not marginalised or frustrated, as is the danger in other implementations of translanguaging (Cataldo-Schwarzl, 2022). All languages, also rare languages, are equally welcome.

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